

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. **Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).**

1. Name of Property

historic name Durgan Bridge
other names/site number Courthouse Bridge, Nevada Street Bridge

2. Location

street & number Nevada Street
city or town Downieville
state California code CA county Sierra code 091 zip code 95936

☐
☐

not for publication

vicinity

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this ___ nomination ___ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

___ national ___ statewide ___ local

Signature of certifying official/Title _____ Date _____

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government _____

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official _____ Date _____

Title _____ State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government _____

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

___ entered in the National Register

___ determined eligible for the National Register

___ determined not eligible for the National Register

___ removed from the National Register

___ other (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | private |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | public - Local |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | public - State |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | public - Federal |

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | building(s) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | district |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | site |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | structure |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | object |

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
		buildings
		district
		site
1	0	structure
		object
1	0	Total

Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

Historic bridges in California MPS

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Transportation: Road related

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Transportation: Road related

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

One lane steel, rigid connected Pratt through truss

span

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation:

walls:

roof:

other: Steel structure

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance of the property. Explain contributing and noncontributing resources if necessary. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, setting, size, and significant features.)

Summary Paragraph

The existing Jersey Bridge, built in 1938 across the North Yuba River, is a rare surviving example of a one lane, rigid connected Pratt through truss span. Designed to carry local traffic on Nevada Street over the North Yuba River, the single lane bridge continues to carry automobile traffic on its one lane (11 foot, 10 inch) roadway since built in 1938.

Narrative Description

The bridge has maintained a high degree of integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. The bridge just surpassed a century of service, is unchanged, and rare. It also makes a critical contribution to the rural atmosphere of Downieville.

The Durgan Bridge, 140 feet long, continues to carry automotive and pedestrian traffic over the Downie River connecting Nevada Street in the community of Downieville. While once common throughout California, a relatively small number of rigid connected Pratt through truss bridges survive today within the state. Less common yet, are such bridges that are just a single lane wide and still in use carrying automotive traffic.

The Durgan Bridge was built by the Judson Pacific Company and was built to replace a bridge destroyed months earlier by floodwaters.

Until the 1920s, metal truss bridges faced little competition from other bridge types. The metal trusses were stronger and more rigid than wooden bridges, and they were fire resistant. Due to competition among dozens of bridge firms then in operation and standardization of bridge designs, metal truss bridges were relatively inexpensive and easy to construct. Steel beam technology and reinforced concrete technology had not yet fully developed, so that metal truss bridges were the best way to span great distances. Concrete arches and beams would eventually supplant metal truss bridges as common waterway crossings. In the latter half of the twentieth century, very few truss bridges would be built. Because the existing truss bridges were often built for traffic either before or in the early stages of fossil-fuel-powered vehicles, many have become too narrow or unable to carry modern loads. In addition, their many exposed metal parts result in corrosion problems, further weakening them. As a result, metal truss bridges, once ubiquitous, are now becoming a rarity on the landscape.

That this bridge continues in place as a structure that continues to carry vehicular traffic makes it rare indeed and an excellent example of this type of structure. That it is just a single lane wide and still in use makes it even a more rare and unique survivor.

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- ☒ A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☐ B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☐ C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- ☐ A Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- ☐ B removed from its original location.
- ☐ C a birthplace or grave.
- ☐ D a cemetery.
- ☐ E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- ☐ F a commemorative property.
- ☐ G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Community planning and development

Period of Significance

1938

Significant Dates

1851 – initial bridge built

Numerous replacements

1938 existing bridge built

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Judson Pacific Company

Designed by County Engineer George Taylor

Period of Significance (justification)

Built in 1938, this type of single lane bridge, once common throughout California, is now rare on the California landscape. That the bridge is still in use as a structure that continues to carry automobile traffic is even more rare.

Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance and applicable criteria.)

Since the establishment of this community in 1848, bridges were to be important infrastructure to this community due to the nature of the geography of where Downieville is located. As gold brought settlers to the area, rivers were the source of that precious metal and there was an early interest on the part of settlers to live near those waterways. Additionally, little flat ground was to be found in the area adjacent the confluence of the North Yuba and Downie Rivers, forcing the location of any community that developed to be adjacent both rivers. The community first known as "The Fork's" soon became Downieville, after Scottish born and early settler William Downie. As the community developed on different 'flats' adjacent each side of each rivers, Zumwalt, Durgan, Jersey, and Washington District, a number of bridges were early built and have been maintained (built, destroyed, rebuilt) since that time.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

Community planning and development

Like many communities, the geography surrounding the community of Downieville would be tied closely to its founding, development, and continued existence. Situated at the confluence of two deep mountain canyons carrying two significant rivers, the community was forced to straddle these rivers to exist in this location of heavy gold deposits. Such a location would require the early building of two bridges in order for the community to exist and two more were early viewed as likewise for the community that developed. In each instance, a single lane bridge was viewed as all that was necessary to supply the community with its necessary traffic system. While each bridge has been replaced any number of times due to flood, fire, or collapse, in each instance the successor bridges that now date from between 1910 and 1938 continue to represent the type, style, design, and capacity of bridges that have served this community for 161 years.

These bridges are today unique as they limit this community, like the geography that surrounds it, to a rural and slow pace reflected in 19th century California. While no longer wooden surfaced, these one lane structures in a community with no traffic lights, limit traffic to a certain pace not seen in any other California community. Singularly unique, the Jersey Bridge carries a state highway in a single lane configuration, the only such point for the entire length of state highway 49 through California's gold country from Oakhurst, Mariposa County to Vinton, Plumas County, forcing north bound traffic to stand an wait while south bound traffic passes, and vice versa.

Since the establishment of this community in 1848, bridges were to be important infrastructure to this community due to the nature of the geography of where Downieville is located. As gold brought settlers to the area, rivers were the source of that precious metal and there was an early interest on the part of settlers to live near those waterways. Additionally, little flat ground was to be found in the area adjacent the confluence of the North Yuba and Downie Rivers, forcing the location of any community that developed to be adjacent both rivers. The community first known as "The Fork's" soon became Downieville, after Scottish born and early settler William Downie. As the community developed on different 'flats' adjacent each side of each rivers, Zumwalt, Durgan, Jersey, and Washington District, a number of bridges were early built and have been maintained (built, destroyed, rebuilt) since that time. While this application nominates the Hansen Bridge, it is one of four single lane bridges that remain in this community, with three still in use for vehicular traffic. Today, these four bridges together, a single lane each in every instance, reflect and portray a style and pace of travel in 1930s depression era California.

Developmental history/additional historic context information (if appropriate)

Of the four historic bridges in Downieville, the Durgan Bridge was the site of what is arguably Downieville's most significant historic event. The July 5, 1851 lynching of the Spanish woman known to history as Juanita was only only lynching of a woman in California's history. While the bridge from which Juanita was long ago destroyed by flood, its replacement is believed by historians to be the Durgan Bridge site. The first Durgan Bridge was built in 1851 by local businessman James Durgan for whom the flat was named and was comprised of a pedestrian foot bridge. Later in 1851 Durgan widened the bridge for wagon traffic and along with the Jersey Bridge, are the principal bridge crossings of Downieville. Durgan Bridges are believed to have been destroyed by floods in 1852, 1861, 1881, and again in 1937. The current Durgan Bridge, still one lane at 12 feet wide with a 4 foot raised pedestrian walkway, was built by Judson Pacific Company and designed by county surveyor George F. Taylor. A riveted Pratt through truss bridge, it has been unmodified since built in 1938.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

James J. Sinnott's, Downieville, Gold town on the Yuba, 1972

James J. Sinnott's, A General History of Sierra County, 1978

North Fork of Yuba River (Nevada Street) Bridge Improvement Report, JRP Historical Construction Services, Feb 2001

National Geographic, "Guide to Small Town Escapes"

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been requested)

☐ previously listed in the National Register

☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register

☐ designated a National Historic Landmark

☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____

☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

☐ recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

☐ State Historic Preservation Office

☐ Other State agency

☐ Federal agency

☒ Local government

☐ University

☐ Other

Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Less than one _____

(Do not include previously listed resource acreage.)

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 10 686472 4381129
 Zone Easting Northing

2 _____ _____ _____
 Zone Easting Northing

3 _____ _____ _____
 Zone Easting Northing

4 _____ _____ _____
 Zone Easting Northing

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

Bridge structure spanning the North Yuba River and connecting Nevada Street, Downieville, Sierra County, California.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

Limited to bridge structure.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Lee Adams, Supervisor, District One

organization County of Sierra

date 2 February 2012

street & number PO Drawer D telephone 530.289.3295
city or town Downieville state CA 95936
e-mail hangman@sierracounty.ws

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Continuation Sheets**
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

Photographs:

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

Name of Property:

City or Vicinity:

County:

State:

Photographer:

Date Photographed:

Description of Photograph(s) and number:

1 of ____.

Property Owner:

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name County of Sierra (Tim H. Beals, Director of Transportation)
street & number PO Box 98 telephone 530.289.3201
city or town Downieville state CA 95936

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management. U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.